



# RUSSELL & LAZARUS APC

PERSONAL INJURY TRIAL ATTORNEYS

Exclusively handling serious and catastrophic personal injury claims as well as wrongful death claims due to the negligence of individuals or business entities.



**The Right Help When You Need It Most!**

April/May 2020

- AUTO COLLISIONS
- MOTORCYCLE COLLISIONS
- BICYCLE ACCIDENTS
- TRIP/SLIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS
- CONSTRUCTION SITE ACCIDENTS
- ELDER ABUSE CLAIMS
- BRAIN TRAUMA CLAIMS
- WRONGFUL DEATH CLAIMS

## TURNING A NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE

### Improving and Providing Through COVID-19

It is hard not to address what is going on right now. COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on the world. Many businesses are closing for days or weeks at a time, and some are even going out of business. The normal hustle and bustle has suddenly ceased. With both foot traffic and vehicle traffic down, there are virtually no accidents, and while that's a very good thing, it is a concern for how we continue to staff our team and all of the other issues that arise when a business model is threatened by something not within the business's control.

If no accidents or fewer accidents were always the case, I would be very happy with that. It would mean fewer people are getting hurt. And although we help injured people, we could just pivot to another consumer-oriented area of law. However, as it stands now, we need to make sure the business of our practice continues to thrive and, more importantly, continues to provide our clients with the service, communication, and results that they and their claims deserve.

I have spent 60-plus years on this planet, and whenever I've had a significant change take place in my life, it has been for the better. As humans, we don't like change — we create routines for ourselves and like staying in our bubbles for as long as we possibly can. That adage, "Don't fix what ain't broke," is completely true when it comes to how most of us live our lives. The downside, of course, is that many times this thought process prevents us from reaching our full potential.

The dot-com bust took place in 1999–2000, and in 2008, the Great Recession hit. During those times, our firm was forced to change to accommodate what was going on, whether that meant being more aggressive in our marketing, taking on different types of claims, or just getting better and more efficient with how we practiced our area of law.



**“There can always be a silver lining to a crisis.”**

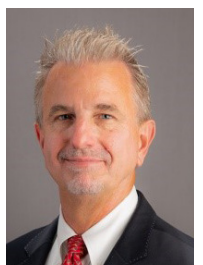
In 2008 specifically, I took a hard look at our practice and wasn't happy with the level of service we were providing our clients. It got me thinking: If we weren't getting much new business in the door, we should just focus on serving our current clients better in order to not only obtain a better outcome for them but to also create a more organic form of word-of-mouth marketing. So we

made a hard pivot to really focus on service, communication, and results. We beefed up the number of team members, created a bonus structure based on client satisfaction, and started hiring team members who had the “eye of the tiger” for getting great results. The Bible says, “You reap what you sow.” That was exactly what happened to us because since that time, revenue has tripled and client satisfaction has soared, which is reflected in the testimonials that can be seen on our website, Yelp, Google, etc.

There can always be a silver lining to a crisis. During this crisis, we have learned we can work from home with a cloud-based computer network, take depositions and attend mediations via Zoom, Skype, Google, etc., utilize a new internet phone system, and finally reach our long-term goal of having a completely paperless office. These are all good things that will help us serve our clients better now and in the future.

As we work to put this crisis behind us, I know that my history running our law firm teaches me that “this too shall pass.” Not only will we come out of this, but we will also do so as a better law firm, providing our clients better service and obtaining better results. It is my hope for all of those reading this newsletter that you also can turn this current negative into a positive in your lives as well.

— *Chris Russell*



# THE FINAL FRONTIER

## NASA Takes You on a (Virtual) Space Adventure



Commercial space travel might still be the stuff of science fiction stories, but thanks to computer programs and augmented reality, your family can still experience what it's like to explore space. NASA and other organizations provide a wealth of free resources that make space exploration come to life for stargazers and future astronauts alike. Take some time to explore a few of our favorites today.

### TOURING THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

First launched in 1998, the International Space Station is a multinational space research laboratory. Nineteen different nations have sent astronauts, cosmonauts, and space tourists to the space station to conduct scientific experiments. It's truly the

stuff science fiction dreams are made of! In 2012, Expedition 33 Commander Sunita Williams filmed a full tour of this amazing floating lab and even included a quick lesson on how to work out in zero gravity. "Visit" the space station for yourself at [Bit.ly/ISSTour](http://Bit.ly/ISSTour).

### EXPLORING DEEP SPACE VIA VIRTUAL REALITY

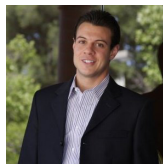
On Jan. 30, 2020, NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope concluded its 16-year mission researching exoplanets, which are planets outside our solar system. This data was used to create Exoplanet Excursions, an immersive virtual reality experience that lets your family experience the Spitzer's discoveries and control the telescope yourself. These incredible excursions

are available on Oculus or Steam, so visit [Spitzer.Caltech.edu/vr](http://Spitzer.Caltech.edu/vr) to start your adventure and explore deep space today!

### PLANET-HOPPING WITH NASA

Have you ever wondered would it be like to stand on another world? Then "book" your next vacation with the Exoplanet Travel Bureau! This program takes you on digital tours of real exoplanets NASA has discovered. Though we don't know what the surfaces of these worlds look like, artists have used scientific data to create 3D landscapes to explore. See them all, from Kepler-16b to TRAPPIST-1e, at [Exoplanets.NASA.gov/alien-worlds/exoplanet-travel-bureau](http://Exoplanets.NASA.gov/alien-worlds/exoplanet-travel-bureau).

## TEAM MEMBER FEATURE



## Meet Joseph Gallo

Here to Help His Clients Through Stressful Times

Joseph Gallo really enjoys the company of others. Not only does he like golfing and hiking with his group of long-time friends, but he also enjoys the occasional pool party and letting loose with a bit of dancing (you should have seen him at the Christmas party!). However, his favorite activity is skateboarding, which is pretty ironic with him being a personal injury attorney. "Skateboarding isn't common for an attorney," Joseph says, "but I grew up as a skateboarder and was even sponsored for a time in high school. It was a big part of my life, and I still enjoy it. It gets the endorphins going. Sometimes I go down to the beach and just cruise."

Unfortunately, as Californians across the state — as well as the rest of the world during the pandemic — are encouraged to stay at home, Joseph hasn't gotten out much. However, as he states, "I can't

wait to get back out there and throw a pool party and go skateboarding again!"

Though he hasn't had the chance to get outside and take time to enjoy his favorite hobbies recently, Joseph has doubled his efforts at work, which recently resulted in a \$275,000 settlement for one of his clients, who was deliriously happy with the outcome. The passion that Joseph has as one of our younger but more aggressive attorneys here at Russell & Lazarus has allowed him to help his clients, no matter what situation they may be in, and get them the best result.

Before Joseph was hired at Russell & Lazarus, he was working as a real estate agent after studying finance and real estate in the hopes that he would become a business and real estate attorney. "I did that in my first years of practice, but it felt like the practice was limited, and the things I was dealing with felt lifeless. I really needed

a chance to do something where I felt like I was actually helping people." Fortunately for Joseph and our clients, he found exactly that when he made a hard pivot in his career and landed on our doorstep.

Joseph had actually worked a bit in the personal injury field prior to joining Russell & Lazarus, "It was more on the plaintiff side," Joseph explains, "but I did a little bit on the defense side in that first year too. On the plaintiff side, though, I felt like there was a much stronger connection to helping people who were injured. Then, after I started going up against the bigger insurance companies, I really started to fall in love with it because it's a "David and Goliath" scenario. Our clients are injured, and these companies and corporations are low-balling them and even making up defenses." It is clear to us that Russell & Lazarus is the perfect place for Joseph to fight that fight.

# CASE STUDY

## How We Got Justice for Grandma

Insurance companies will do everything they can to avoid giving people the money they deserve after an accident. It's a sad fact that our team at Russell & Lazarus will not allow. Here is just one of thousands of stories our firm can tell, which confirm both of these points.

**Case Facts:** Our client, a 74-year-old grandmother of six, was sitting in the back of the family Volvo, a pretty sturdy car, on a drive with two of her grandchildren, her son, and her daughter-in-law. At a stoplight, the family was rear-ended by a 21-year-old tow truck driver — going about 50 mph — who hadn't been paying attention. After the accident, the Volvo resembled an accordion.

Our client was knocked unconscious at the scene and was taken to the hospital by ambulance. Although she was brought to the emergency room and had several follow-ups with her doctors, she continued to have neck pain. However, she pushed through it and didn't seek more aggressive treatment until after our attorneys got involved a couple months later. We referred

her to a good doctor and finally got her the appropriate medical treatment and an MRI. She eventually had neck surgery a year after the accident due to the pain.

**The Offer:** Our client's total medical bills were \$200,000, but the best offer we received prior to filing a lawsuit was \$100,000. We litigated the case for two years and received a new offer of \$250,000, which was still not enough to cover her medical bills and the \$100,000 in costs for prosecuting the claim. Right before trial, they offered an even lower amount of \$150,000. It was a classic game of insurance company hard ball.

**The Outcome:** Most insurance companies think only one of two possibilities are true with accident victims: the victims are faking or exaggerating their injuries. This insurance company was no different. They fought against our client's claim, never believing it was credible, and threw everything they could at her, hoping to scare her into accepting a pennies-on-the-dollar offer.

One of the issues that popped up during litigation as she was testifying to prior neck conditions was that she forgot that she had a neck issue five years prior, for which she had two visits to her doctor. Our retained expert and surgeon, Dr. Gerald Alexander, was able to testify that because our client was a cancer survivor and had gone through chemotherapy, she suffered from "chemo fog." This meant that her memory was faulty about her past medical history. The defense, of course, argued that our client was a liar and had no credibility. However, after a two-week trial, the jury saw the truth. They came back after six hours of deliberation with an \$875,000 reward, along with repayment of our \$100,000 in court costs.

The insurance company thought they could bully our client into submission, but we were not going to allow that to take place. It took three years, a trial, and a lot of stress on our client's part, but in the end, our team here at Russell & Lazarus obtained fair compensation and justice for this wonderful grandmother.

## NO-PEEK CHICKEN

Alicia Contreras | Pre-Litigation Clerk

Prep Time: 10 minutes  
Total Time: 1 hour and 30 minutes

## INGREDIENTS

- Cooking spray
- 2 cups long-grain rice
- 10.5-oz can cream of chicken soup
- 10.5-oz can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 cup water
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
- Kosher salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1-oz package onion soup mix
- Parsley, freshly chopped, for garnish

## DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350 F and grease a 9x13 baking pan with cooking spray. In a large bowl, mix together rice, soups, water, and oregano and pour into the baking dish.
2. Season chicken with salt and pepper and place on top of rice mixture. Sprinkle onion soup mix over the chicken and cover with aluminum foil. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes or until chicken is cooked through and rice is tender.
3. Garnish with parsley before serving.



## MANNY GUTIERREZ, CASE MANAGER: FATHER OF TWO UNDER 2!

The Gutierrez family is enjoying their newest addition, Kaiden, who was born on Friday, March 20, 2020, at 4:07 a.m. He weighed 5 pounds, 9 ounces and measured 18 inches long. Kaiden loves Mommy's voice, Daddy's arms, and Big Brother's kisses.

They say that babies born during this pandemic are a sign of hope. Congrats, Gutierrez family!





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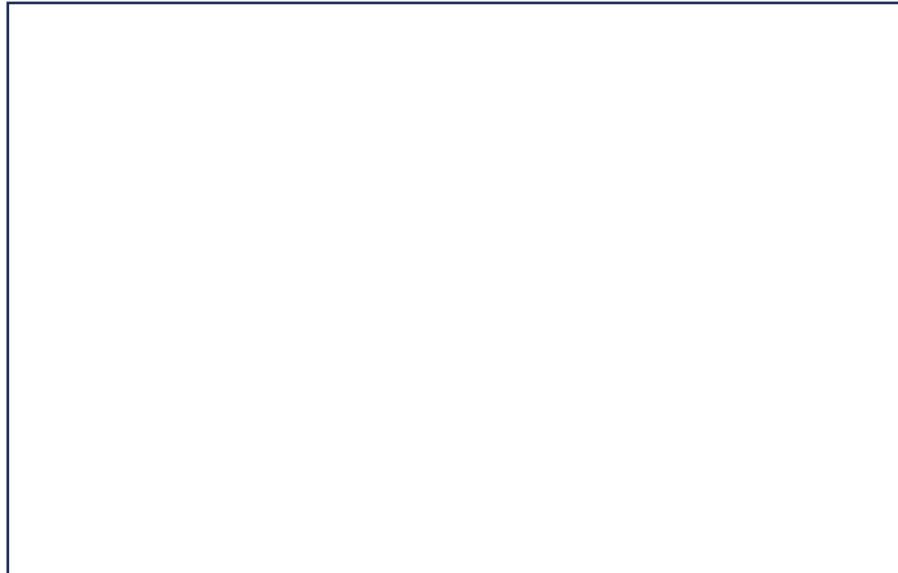
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# INSIDE this issue



## Super Lawyers

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- PG 2** Go Planet-Hopping With NASA Team Member Spotlight
- PG 3** Standing Up to Greedy Corporations No-Peek Chicken
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## TESTIMONIALS

### 'Great, Hardworking Advocates'

"Russell & Lazarus is a remarkable firm. Great, hardworking advocates and trial attorneys. This firm works as a team and is truly inspirational. Kathleen has helped guide me along the way, and I am really grateful!"

—Sasha

### 'Informative and Considerate'

"The firm of Russell & Lazarus has helped my family. They are very informative and considerate. They take great pride in each individual. They work very hard to get you every dollar you and your family deserve. I felt like a part of their family because they take great care of you."

—Bradley

### 'Exceeded My Expectations'

"I was referred to Russell & Lazarus by a friend. Manny did an excellent job of making sure my medical questions were answered and my needs taken care of. He was always patient with my questions, and I didn't have to worry about anything regarding the claim. The outcome exceeded my expectations."

—Lisa

## 2 CASE RESULTS

### Hospitalized for 5 Months

Our 34-year-old pregnant client was rear-ended by a driver insured by Allstate. Due to her injuries, she was placed on in-hospital observation for five months and incurred over \$139,000 in medical expenses. The Allstate insurance policy limit was only \$100,000, and that limit was demanded on her behalf. Allstate refused to offer more than \$10,000 because there was moderate property damage, and Allstate argued that our client was not placed on observation due to the collision. Thankfully, the baby was delivered healthy. Both sides agreed to have the matter resolved by way of a binding arbitration with a retired judge. The judge awarded our deserving client \$327,826 for fear that permanent damage had been caused to her baby for the five months she was in the hospital. We forced Allstate to pay more than \$200,000 above the policy for not resolving the case when we initially demanded the \$100,000 policy limits.

### First Responder Injured

Our 45-year-old first responder client was rear-ended, causing soft-tissue (non-broken bone) injuries that required chiropractic treatment and physical therapy. The insurance carrier initially refused to pay fair value for the injuries because the vehicle had no significant visible damage. However, during litigation, we retained an accident reconstructionist who clocked the other vehicle's speed at the time of impact at 24 mph. As a result, the defendant's insurance carrier conceded that the collision was of sufficient force to cause the injuries identified, forcing State Farm to finally tender the \$100,000 policy limits.